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*To the Librarian in Hawaii  
Col. Cambridge,  
from E. Hill*

THE SUBSTANCE

OF

TWO LECTURES,

ON THE

HISTORY OF MASON,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE LYCEUM

IN

MASON VILLAGE,

BY REV. EBENEZER HILL.

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PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.  
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FITCHBURG:

W. J. MERRIAM,....PRINTER.

1846.



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## CORRESPONDENCE.

TO THE REV. EBENEZER HILL,

Dear Sir:—We, whose names are here subscribed, were appointed a committee to request a copy for publication of your recent instructive and interesting discourse upon the early history of Mason, delivered before the Mason Village Lyceum. Desirous of preserving the history of the past, and admonished by your advanced age, that we cannot long hope to enjoy your society, we trust you will comply with our request.

Yours truly,

GEORGE ELLIOT,  
THOMAS H. MARSHALL,  
D. F. RICHARDSON.

Mason Village, Feb. 24th, 1846.

To George Elliot, Esq., Dr. Thomas H. Marshall, and Rev. D. F. Richardson,

Gentlemen:—The request of the Lyceum, made through you, of a copy of the Lectures on the History of the Town, delivered last winter, I cannot refuse. Yet I am constrained to appreciate the request, rather as a mark of respect to old age, than as an evidence of merit in the performance.

Various hindrances have caused delay in examining facts, and in transcribing and preparing the copy. Such as it is, I cheerfully present it to you, and through you, Gentlemen, to the members of the Lyceum, with many warm wishes for the spiritual and temporal prosperity of the risen and rising generation.

Very respectfully your friend,

And humble servant.

EBENEZER HILL.

Mason, May 1, 1846.

*The Rev. Mr. Hill was born in  
Franklin, N. H. on the 27th of Feb. 1766. He died  
and was buried at the residence in 1786.*

# LECTURE.

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Most people take pleasure in reading History, and learning the events of ancient days. But when the history relates to scenes in which their immediate ancestors were concerned—to events which have a bearing on their own state and condition, the interest deepens as they proceed.

Who will not find entertainment and profit in reading the history of England from its earliest period? But as the time approaches when our forefathers were forced to leave their pleasant dwellings and their beloved country, and seek an asylum in a newly discovered continent, where they might enjoy civil and religious liberty, what man of common sensibility—certainly, what true American, is not moved more and more? And is there even a scholar in our common schools, who can read the landing of the Pilgrims on the Rock in Plymouth, and the severe sufferings they had to endure, and the labors they had to perform, without feeling his heart beat quick within him? But history, whether civil, ecclesiastical, or biographical, not only affords entertainment, but in a pleasing manner valuable instruction. Nor is it necessary that the history should abound in marvellous and wonder-stirring events, to render it pleasant and profitable.

Entertaining these views I am led to believe, that the History of Mason may be thus useful to the present inhabitants of the town, and especially to the young people; and in compliance with special request, I now attempt to present such facts relative to this town, and its early inhabitants, as I have been able to collect, from records which have come into my hands, and from conversation had with old people, almost all of whom are now—as we must shortly be—in the grave.

The land included in this town is part of a grant made to Captain John Mason, of London, by the King of England, and it appears from records that certain persons bought of John Tufston Mason, heir of John Mason, a tract of his said grant in New Hampshire, containing about 77 square miles, of which tract this town is a part.

At a meeting of these Proprietors by purchase of Mason, held at Portsmouth, Joseph Blanchard, of Dunstable, was accredited their agent; and as such, in their name, by deed or charter, conveyed to a company, whose names are expressed in the instrument, a certain tract of land five miles square, which was the dimension and shape of this town in its original grant: but afterwards a strip of land containing 200 acres was taken from No. 2, now Wilton, and

annexed to No. 1, so called; also when the Province line was run between Massachusetts and New Hampshire, a gore of land was cut off from Townsend, and annexed to Mason; so that it was no longer square, but wider from North to South than from East to West. The charter or deed was executed June 16, 1749; and the names of 34 men are inserted in the instrument as grantees; most of whom, as far as I can judge by the names and other circumstances, were from the towns of Dunstable, Hollis, Groton, Pepperell, and Townsend. This township, thus obtained, was designated No. 1, in the Province of New Hampshire, north or back of Townsend.

In the charter were certain reservations, which shew the regard, both grantors and grantees had for the education of the youth, and the moral and religious instruction of all, as well as for the comfort of the early settlers. For instance, two lots of land were reserved for encouragement to build mills; six acres were reserved for a common, wherever the meeting house should be located. Three shares were reserved for other uses, viz: One share to the first settled minister; one share for the ministry from generation to generation.\* This right has been disposed of, and I say *happily* disposed of, (notwithstanding the good intentions of the grantors, and perhaps the illegality of the act,) for in this day it is not a bone of contention. A third share was reserved for the support of schools; and it is a matter of *regret* that this also is disposed of.

There were not only reservations, but also conditions in the charter. The first condition was that a meeting house should be built by the grantees, for the use of the inhabitants; and built as near the centre, as by the grantees should be judged most convenient. The time for this to be done was limited to May, 1753. Such a house within about three rods North East of the now Old Meeting House, was erected, enclosed and covered, and little more ever done to it. Thus it remained the place of worship, until after what is now called the Old Meeting House in the centre was occupied.†

Another condition in the charter was, that on some lot in each share, three acres should be cleared, enclosed, and fitted for mowing or tillage in two years from the date; and on each should be a house at least sixteen feet square, and seven feet or more studded, with a chimney and cellar, fitted for a dwelling, and some person or family inhabit it, before the last of May, 1752; and residence be continued until May, 1755.

The settlement of the town advanced slowly. Yet it appears from the report of a committee, appointed to ascertain who had *not* performed their duty, that in three years after the grant, twenty-three settlements had been begun—few had more than eight acres cleared, and the greatest clearing was twenty acres. Two good houses, one barn and a young orchard were reported. What kind

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\* Supposed to be three lots.

† This house was afterwards torn down; and at the time the following incident took place. When the frame was all down except the four posts confined by the gallery sills, Amos Dakin was standing on one of these sills, when the remainder of the frame swayed and fell. He kept his place until almost to the ground, and then leaped and fell flat; the timber just passed over him, and he received no injury.

of houses, the first were, may be gathered from this circumstance, that Mr. Obadiah Parker's house was the first framed house in the town, perhaps the only one, at that time,\* and only two were called good. From which we may conclude that twenty-one out of the twenty-three were made of round logs, or at best with square timber; but one of these log houses remains to this day.†

When the settlements were very few, instead of being compact, as might have been expected from the social nature of man, they were scattered to almost every part of the town. Enosh Lawrence, whose axe was first heard to resound in our forests, was from Pepperell, and began his settlement in the South part of the town, where Ephraim Hildreth now lives. His wife was the first white woman in the town, and lived to old age. Nathan Hall, known here as Deacon Hall, also from Pepperell, began next to Mr. Lawrence, and settled in the North part, where Joseph Saunders now lives. Obadiah Parker located himself on the West side of the town. There were only three women in the town, when Mrs. Parker left her relatives and friends in Chelmsford, to accompany her husband into this wilderness, which was then considered as almost *the far West*. Thomas Tarbell settled in the East, where some of his descendants now live, and a Mr. Powers located in the extreme East. For a time the only place that appeared like a neighborhood was on the hill, where Deacon Hall settled. Soon after him Henry Jeffs began where Jonathan Batchelder lives; Nathan Fish where Ira Hall lately lived, and one Samuel Tarbell where Luther Nutting lives.

The character of the first settlers was that of plain, honest farmers. Most of them, in the common language of the world, were poor. Some of them had scarcely more than their clothes, their axe and a little provision. They were also men of little education, and their children suffered greatly for want of schooling.

Would our children and youth know how great their privileges are, and how to prize them, let them, in imagination, go back fifty or sixty years, and place themselves for a little time beside those of their age at that period. The children were then so widely scattered, that for a time it was impracticable to form them into schools. The standard of education also was low. A man who could read plain reading, and cypher to the Rule of Three, was considered qualified to teach a common school. And even in the early days of *your* fathers, my young friends, when they went to school they had not a well constructed and comfortable school house. Most commonly they had a room in some private house, miserably fitted up with benches to sit on, and a kind of tottering table on which to write, and not unfrequently scarcely light enough to see to read. Add to all this, they had very few books in schools or in families. In many places scholars seldom if ever heard in school of English Grammar, Geography, Natural Philosophy, Mathematics, &c., which are studies now brought within the reach of almost every youth. If therefore the present generation do not exceed the preceding in useful learning, great blame must be attached to them.

Our forefathers, and mothers too, who subdued the wilderness

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\*This is the old house on the place where Samuel Wheeler Weston now lives.

†The house in which Stephen Foster now resides.

before them, were a hardy and an industrious race. The prime object of their clothing was comfort, and their food was very uniform and plain. Tea was not known among them in this early period. In summer, milk and bread was the food, especially of children, morning and evening; and in the winter, as a general thing, they had a good boiled dish for dinner, which laid the foundation for a supper, and for a breakfast next morning for the family. And I presume those early inhabitants of the town never heard of such a disease as Dyspepsia. They were not distinguishingly subject to fevers; and cases of consumption were very rare; and where they did occur, they were slow in their progress—not unfrequently did it take years to do the work, which consumption now sometimes performs in a few weeks. Also, when our hardy ancestors were going through the toil of subduing the wilderness, they did not have ardent spirits to cool them in the heat of labor, when toiling in the fire, or to warm them when buffeting the storms, or enduring the cold of winter.

Another trait in the character of the early settlers of No. 1, is to be distinctly noticed, or we shall injure them. Most of them were brought up where the holy Sabbath was regarded, and they were accustomed to hear the gospel preached. They did not, when removed far from the sanctuary, and from the ordinances of the gospel, feel as if this were a desired freedom. They not only made early efforts, even before they were an incorporate body, to have occasional preaching, but they were desirous of having a minister settled among them; and few and feeble as they were, they did not shrink from the effort on account of the expense. As early as 1753, the proprietors and inhabitants voted to allow sixty pounds (Old Tenor, undoubtedly,) to pay for preaching, and from thistime it appears they had preaching more or less every year.

Previous to this, they had voted to build a meeting house, agreed upon the dimensions, appointed a committee, and directed them "to enclose the house, lay the under floor, and build a convenient place for the minister to stand in to preach." This was an arduous undertaking considering their number, and especially that they had no mill, in which they could prepare materials for building from their own forests. But it was done. And having a house for worship, they were not satisfied with preaching part of the time. They voted to settle a minister as early as 1762, i. e., in 13 years after the grant of the township. At the same time they gave a call to Mr. Ebenezer Champney, (the late Judge Champney, of New Ipswich,) to settle with them; and offered him as settlement "700 £ silver, O. T." £400 salary yearly, and a right of land. This was a generous offer considering their number and circumstances. I have named these sums more particularly for the benefit, or perhaps the amusement, of the young people, who may wish for some information respecting this Old Tenor, and its valuation.

The currency of our ancestors in New England was reckoned in pounds, shillings and pence, and was called Old Tenor, in distinction from another valuation of the same denominations of money, called Lawful money, or sometimes New Tenor. Now although the same terms were used in both, their meaning, or valuation was widely different. The denomination in Old Tenor was just seven

and a half times less in value, than the same in Lawful money. Hence to reduce Lawful Money into Old Tenor is to multiply it by  $7\frac{1}{2}$ , and to reduce Old Tenor into Lawful money, divide by the same. Hence we see that the offer made to Mr. Champney was, in the present currency of the day, \$311 12 cents settlement, and \$177 78 cents salary.\* Mr. Champney did not accept the call; nevertheless the people were not discouraged. In 1766, they gave a call to one James Parker, with an offer of £400 O. T., until they were 80 families, and then £450 until 100 families, from which time the salary should be established at £500. This call was not accepted; and it does not appear that any other like attempt was made, until an act of incorporation was obtained.

These hardy pioneers not only suffered many privations, but endured many severe hardships. Not the least of these was the labor of making roads, and for years the badness of travelling, where something was done to make a road. And until they could raise some grain on their new farms, all their bread stuffs, and most of their other provisions must be brought from the older settlements. The instance of hardship, which I am about to name, may be an extreme case, but it may help our young friends to form some idea of the sufferings incident to new settlers, especially to those, who are poor and industrious. Deacon Hall, who has been named, I have been informed, after having toiled all day on his farm, has in the night travelled on foot to Pepperell, and returned bringing a bag of meal on his shoulder for his hungry children; and then labored the next day as usual.

Not the least of the sufferings, and the cause of continued suffering, arose from their ignorance of clearing wood land, by felling the trees and then burning the ground over. I have been told by some of them that for several years, the only method of clearing the forest was to chop the wood, draw it together, pile it, burn the heaps, and then break up the ground with the plough, or breaking-up hoe, before planting or sowing. This accounts in some measure for the slow progress they at first made in clearing.

Again, the people suffered very much for years from want of mills. It was a primary object with the grantees and first settlers to have mills erected; and, as encouragement, mill seats were looked out, and land granted and contracts made, but I can find no evidence of a mill of any description in the town before the year 1766, or 7. In the year 1767, I find an article in a warrant for a meeting of the Proprietors, to see if they will accept the road by Thomas Barrett's mill, and build a bridge across Souhegan river, near said mill. It appears that Benjamin Bellows, Esq., contracted to build mills at this place, but did not fulfil his contract. And also that Thomas Barrett and Charles Barrett built mills in this place, and sold them to Amos Dakin, of Lincoln, Mass., who removed with his family into this town in the year 1768. At that time, 78 years since, there was no opening in the dense forest, where this village now stands, except for the mill, and a spot cleared for a house. In 1767, Elias Elliot's mill was accepted by the Propri-

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\* Thus £700-- $7\frac{1}{2}$ =93, 6, 8 Lawful=\$311 11+ settlement. Again £400 O. T.--by  $7\frac{1}{2}$ =£53, 6s, 8d Lawful=to \$177 78+ cents.

etors. I have also evidence that not far from the same time, a mill was erected in the east part of the town, on the Ward place so called, where Mr. Bennet now lives.

Now think how much the people must have suffered who lived 10 or 15 years, where, if they raised any grain they must carry it to Townsend or Pepperell, and sometimes even to Groton, to have it made into meal; and although they had timber in abundance, they could not have a board, but it must come from another town. Yet they submitted to these inconveniences and hardships with cheerfulness, and persevered in labor, till they had prepared for the comfort of their children.

Not only did the men display courage, and resolution, and public spirit, but I have been told by the women themselves, that they have travelled, some two, and some three miles through the woods, with nothing to direct their way but marked trees, to carry dinner to their husbands, when working at the meeting house. I believe that some of my hearers would think such a case a great hardship, if the case was theirs.

But, however strong female fortitude may be in duty, where none are exposed to danger but themselves, how must the tender mother suffer, if her young children are absent a little longer than was expected, or if out of sight when the light of day departs — where the wolves and other wild animals are so numerous, that their noise in the night would break them of their rest, who had toiled all day, and needed the refreshment of sleep?

Many of the early settlers reared up and left large families, and their descendants are numerous in the town; but some of the families are almost extinct. Our Fathers, where are they? Many of them lived to be old. But they are gone.\*

As to natural curiosities, this town does not abound in them. There are no very remarkable caverns, or precipices, or streams; and we all know that the face of the ground is uneven, and the soil is stony. There is, however, in the deep hollow east of the old meeting house, (where, by some convulsion of nature the rocks are thrown together in wild confusion,) a small cave, which those who have visited, have thought worthy of a visit. The streams of water are small, yet they afford some valuable mill sites, on which are now eight saw-mills in operation part of the year, and six run of stone for grinding grain.

In this place, I will name another fact, which may be considered belonging to the history of the town. The hills were favorite hunting grounds, and long before a grant of the town was obtained, and for years after it began to be settled, the hunters frequently kindled fires in the woods for the benefit of their hunting. And if the hunters did not fire the woods, some men from lower towns did, that young sprouts might come up for young cattle to feed upon. By these means, some parts of the town, especially Poll Hill, so

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\* A case I will here name as very uncommon and remarkable. Deacon Hall, of whom I have spoken, built him a house in the early period of his settlement, and dwelt in it, with his family (which was not small) to his old age—till it was no longer habitable, and never did an instance of death occur in that house. Nevertheless, the builder, and I believe all that were brought up in that house, have gone the way of the earth.

called, ranging south from the stone school house, was greatly injured, while yielding grain to those who did not own the soil. And some families in Groton used to make hay in the meadow, near the centre, called Nose-meadow, where they had a camp, and in the latter part of winter sent up young cattle, and a black man named Boad, to feed and tend them, until they could get their living in the woods.\* Here Boad used to spend months alone, year after year, like Robinson Crusoe, "sole monarch of all he surveyed."

The period to which we have now arrived, was to this town like that of youth, just blooming into manhood. They began to think, and talk of being incorporated. They had a desire to be like other towns; and yet had fears whether equal to take such a stand. This kind of trembling state of mind appears from their votes at meetings, where the subject was agitated. At a meeting called partly for this purpose, April, 1766, it was finally voted, not to be incorporated at present. Thus it rested until January, 1768, and the meeting was adjourned four weeks for consideration. At the adjournment it was voted to be incorporated, "and that Lt. O. Parker be appointed to attend to the business, and get it accomplished, as soon as may be."

The next point to be settled, was the name by which the town should be called. And at a meeting held, June, 1768, it was voted that the town be called Sharon. It does not appear from any records I have seen, or from any tradition which has reached me, why the name of Sharon was dropped, and the name Mason adopted. There was, however, a report current among the old people, that "a bell was sent from England for this town, as a present from the heirs of Mr. Mason," which, if fact, will account for the name. It is also reported, that by the knavery of the agent of Mr. Mason in Boston, the bell was lost to the town — that he sold the bell, and absconded with this and other dishonest gains. And the bell on the Old South in Boston, is said to be that bell. The next meeting was warned in the name of the inhabitants of Mason; and the place was no longer known as Number 1. But although they had assumed a rank among the towns in the Province, they felt themselves, as a society, weak and feeble. When the first tax was assessed under the corporation, there were but 76 rateable polls, and probably not more than 56 voters; for young men between 18 and 21 years of age were rateable, and their rates charged to fathers or masters. And for a number of years, Brookline, then Raby, was classed with Mason to send a representative to the General Court; and the meetings for choice were held alternately at Brookline and Mason.

It will be necessary now to take some notice of the church, in connection with the history of the town. At that time a town was an incorporate *religious*, as well as civil society. And all the inhabitants of a town belonged to that society, except they united with, or formed another religious society, according to law. The meeting house erected by the original proprietors, was by them given to the town, and remained the only house for their religious as-

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\* Boad's camp was but a few rods from the spot, on which Joel Ames' house now stands. This Boad was a slave.



semblies, and other public meetings, until the year 1790. It was an uncomfortable place. In that house did your fathers worship; and uncomfortable as it was, seldom did a Sabbath pass, even in the cold of winter, in which there was no meeting, after they had a stated ministry. A good number of the early settlers were members of the Congregational church, in the towns from which they removed, but no church was formed in Mason, until the year 1772, at which time Mr. Jonathan Searle was ordained their Pastor. The church then consisted of 21 members, 12 brethren and 9 sisters, all of whom are gone to their long home. When the church was gathered, it was stated to be a Calvinistic Church, and that their articles of faith agree substantially with the principles of religion, contained in the Shorter Catechism of the Assembly of Divines.

Shortly after the settlement of Mr. Searle, unhappy difficulties arose between the Pastor and the flock, which eventuated in his dismissal, in 9 years and 3 months after his ordination. From that time Mr. Searle ceased to preach, but continued in the town, and officiated, as a civil magistrate, to an advanced age. During his ministry, only 14 were admitted to the church by profession, and 9 by letter, and 11 owned the covenant, as it was called, according to the practice of many churches in New England, in those days. The last admitted by profession in Mr. Searle's ministry, was in April, 1777, and but one more, and that by letter, until 1790. Here was a long, death-like sleep! but one added to the church in 13 years. The sleep seems to have been profound — death-like indeed, until the year 1795, when a great revival of religion, and of the work of God, commenced in New Ipswich, under the ministry of the venerable Farrar — a name venerated indeed by all who knew him. The gracious work extended into other towns; and this part of the vineyard was remembered in mercy. Some few christians were awakened, and brought to apply themselves to neglected duties; and the people in Mason, especially the young, flocked to the solemn meetings in New Ipswich, and soon some were reprov- ed of sin, became anxious for their souls, and after a time, rejoiced in hope of pardoning mercy. Such, however, was the state of the church in Mason, broken, dispirited, that the young candidates for the church were led to seek admission to the church in New Ipswich, to which they had become peculiarly attached by that acquaintance, which their situation and intercourse had brought about; and by that mutual love which new-born souls, who have mourned, and wept, and prayed and rejoiced together, must feel. Their request was granted, on condition that they remove their relation whenever the church in Mason should become in a settled state. In the year 1790, the resident members of other churches removed their relation, and the church was increased to 36 in number, and in the same year, Nov. 3d, was the present Pastor ordained, and constituted Pastor of this church. In this long period of 56 years, there have been precious seasons of revival. I will mention some of those seasons. In 1802, the church was increased by the addition of 44 members — in 1812, added 25 — in 1826 and 7, added 86 — in 1834 and '35, added 38; and in 1841, added 83. The whole number of members, received by profession and letter, is rising 450.

A Baptist church was embodied in this town, Oct. 28, 1786, then consisting of seven members, 3 males and 4 females. Additions were made by letter and profession to this church in this and neighboring towns. About this time, Mr. Wm. Elliot, an inhabitant of the town, commenced preaching the gospel, and labored much in this and other towns, as an evangelist, until in August, 1788, the church of which he was a member, gave him a call to become their Pastor, which call he accepted, and was ordained by an ecclesiastical Council, on the 3d Wednesday in November, 1788. For a time, the care of almost all the Baptist churches in the vicinity, came upon him. He raised up a numerous family, and had two sons settled in the ministry. He lived to a good old age, his last sickness was very distressing, which he endured with patience, and died in the triumphs of faith, June 14, 1830, aged 81 years. The church of which he was Pastor, is now merged in the Baptist church in Mason Village.

In the month of May, in the year 1833, another church and society was gathered and embodied in this town, consisting at the time, of twenty-three members. This society assume only the name of *Christian*.

Since the year 1790, there has been no inconsiderable increase of inhabitants, and no little improvement in buildings, and other accommodations. The exact number of voters in 1790, is not ascertained; but in 1768, we may calculate about 56, and in March, 1845, our check list told 306 legal voters. In the year 1790, when almost the whole town undertook to build a meeting house, it was with many discouragements and fears. They felt poor and weak-handed for such an undertaking. The house was built and remains the meeting house of the town. And now, besides this, we have three meeting houses, and three religious societies, and probably each society equally able to build their house, as was the first.

I can reckon up but 110 dwelling houses, of every description, standing in the town in 1790. And at that time, on all the ground which contains this flourishing village, there were standing the first mill built here, one dwelling house, built at two times, for the accommodation of two families, and one barn.\* Now we can count fifty-two dwelling houses, three stores, one meeting house, three factory buildings—one in full operation, carrying 2464 spindles, in this village.

Compare the present state of the Columbian Factory, with the one first built in this village, and it will give a fair view of the advance of our country in manufactures, arts and commerce.

The first Cotton Factory in Mason commenced operation, in the year 1813, with 100 spindles, in 4 small frames, and was kept running night and day. At that time, the price of cotton was from 25 to 30 cents per lb., and the price of yarn, No. 16, was one dollar per lb. In 1814 cotton was 40 cents, and yarn \$1.16 per lb. At that time all the cotton was picked by hand, in private families, and the cloth was wove in house looms; and the price of shirting, was from 30 to 40 cents per yard. For constant market the cloth was

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\*The Widow Polly Hill now occupies the remaining part of the house.

be sent in wagons to Albany. And at that time there was no market here for farm produce.

At the time referred to, 1790, there were but four, and those very poor, school houses in the town ; now there are ten ; some of them may be called good. And not only is the number of dwelling houses increased, but there is an advance in elegance and convenience. At that time many of the dwellings were miserably poor ; and but one in all the town, Mr. Parker's, had any paint on the outside, and that scarcely perceptible by reason of age. And I can think of only three rooms in all the town, then adorned with paper hangings.

Since those ancient days there have been great changes in customs and fashions, and manner of living ; and many conveniences have been introduced ; but whether on the whole for the better, remains to be proved. At that period there was not a chaise, or other wheel carriage for pleasure, in all the town, (a light one horse wagon, for pleasure or business is a modern invention,) neither was there one single sleigh. To ride on horseback was fashionable for men and women ; and could they have a single horse, this was travelling in style. It was not uncommon for a man and woman to ride on the same horse, to meeting or a short journey, and carry one or two children. Probably if I should tell some of my young friends, that their mothers and grand-mothers rode on a *pillion* behind their husbands, they would have no idea of that easy and commodious seat, a *pillion*. But, I have frequently seen a man and his wife ride together on a horse to meeting, on the sabbath, after their united ages amounted to 169 years. It was also not uncommon for families to ride to meeting, or to make social visits, in the winter, on sleds drawn by oxen, and they would chat and smile as cheerfully, as they now do in a stage and four or six.

And will you, my young friends, believe that your mothers and grand mothers, and those who moved in the first grade of society, were not ashamed to be seen in the religious assembly, or in any company on other occasions, dressed in their plain, decent, warm, home made clothing, or at the most, in the summer, in a chintz gown, and a white linen apron ? Such was indeed the fact. And you may judge, whether they were not more *comfortable* than they would have been in some modern dresses—whether the change to costly elegance and finery has been a real advance in the enjoyment of life.

In the early period of the settlement, it was often impracticable to keep the roads open in the winter, so as to pass with a team or a horse from house to house, to meeting or to mill. The people were not however confined at home, through a long and dreary winter. Every family, and almost every man was provided with a pair of snow shoes, otherwise called *rackets*. (It would doubtless be as difficult at this day to give our young men a correct idea of *rackets*, as to give our young ladies a correct idea of a *pillion*.) With these snow shoes they were enabled to walk on the snow, and after passing a few times would have a good foot path from house to house. And not unfrequently were they necessitated to get up their wood, and carry their grain to mill, on hand sleds, drawn on these racket paths. And although horses could not travel, you may not think the young ladies or their mothers were confined at home, and must

lose all the pleasures of social visits, while the snow lay deep on the ground. They too would put on the snow shoes, and travel off. And although enduring a little more fatigue, they enjoyed their visits, it is presumed, as well as do ladies at the present day, when wafted over the snow with the music of bells.

Our ancestors were a hardy race, but they were sometimes visited with sickness, and death entered their dwellings. For a long time they must have obtained all their medical aid from other towns; for there never was a resident Physician in the town, until about 1790, when Dr. Joseph Gray and Dr. William Barber established themselves permanently here. Dr. Barber is yet living. Dr. Willis Johnson commenced medical practice here in the year 1814.

The inhabitants were not so exactly on the peace establishment as to have no litigation; but they were necessitated to seek legal advice and services from gentlemen of the bar in other towns. For there never was a lawyer became an inhabitant of this town, until the late Samuel Whiting, Esq., opened an office, and commenced residence about the year 1825. At the time of my earliest acquaintance with the town, there were, and there had never been, but two justices of the peace in the place, Jonathan Searle and Benjamin Mann; they remained the only magistrates in the town several years after this. Esq. Mann held his office until he removed from the town, and Esq. Searle held his until his death. Who was the first Representative of the town in the General Court, as it was then called, is not easily ascertained. But it appears that as early as the year 1775, Amos Dakin was chosen by the joint ballot of Raby and Mason, to represent them in a Convention at Exeter in December; and likewise commissioned to act in the Assembly, if requisite. This must have been the time when Mr. Dakin travelled from Mason to Exeter on snow shoes, because not practicable in any other way. He may be considered the first Representative. The first Grand Juror chosen was Thomas Tarbell, the first petit Juror drawn was Zachariah Davis—the year 1771.

The early inhabitants of Mason were true sons of liberty. When the difficulties between the mother country and the Colonies, arose to such a pitch as to take away the hope of accommodation, they were ready to act with decision. I have never heard of but one inhabitant of Mason, at that time, who was unfriendly to the cause of the colonies. Captain Samuel Tarbell was then considered a *tory*, as those were called, who were disposed to espouse and maintain the cause of the King and Parliament in all their oppressive acts against the Colonies. He, after the war commenced, fled and took refuge within the British lines. When it was apparent that the Colonies must submit unconditionally, or, weak and feeble as they were, must defend themselves against the mighty power of Great Britain, these sons of the forest were by no means behind any of their brethren, in making preparation for defence, and in readiness to step forward and exert their strength, when called to action. In the year 1774, meetings of the town were frequent; and it appears that there was great unanimity in their resolves, which were all of the defensive character. In this year they voted to purchase a town stock of ammunition, and a quantity of arms.

At the same time, they entered into solemn covenant to suspend all commercial intercourse with Great Britain, until her acts of Parliament levelled at the rights of the Colonies should be repealed; and the Port of Boston, which was then shut, should be opened. This covenant was substantially the same, as was entered into in the Colonies generally; but the spirit of these sons of liberty was seen in the closing up of the solemn covenant, the last clause of which was in substance, that "all who refused or neglected to come into this or a like agreement, ought to be, and should by them be considered and esteemed enemies to their country." Such a covenant was not only voted in town meeting to be accepted, but a committee was appointed to see that the covenant be signed by the inhabitants, and to take and report the names of all who refused to sign. This committee consisted of the following persons: Amos Dakin, Samuel Brown, Joshua Davis, Nathan Hall and James Wethee. Also, in 1775, a committee of *inspection* was appointed, to see that the resolves of the Continental Congress be duly observed. And to prepare for comfortable subsistence as well as for defence, in town meeting it was voted, in view of the increasing difficulty which might be expected, of procuring such a necessary article as Salt, "that 30 hogheads be purchased, while it could be had, for the use of the town."

We have evidence also, that the fathers of the present generation were not only brave and prudent in *Resolves*, but also in *action*.

When tidings arrived in Mason, that the *Regulars*, i. e. the British troops, had gone out from Boston, and proceeded as far as Concord, and that blood was actually shed in Lexington and Concord, the men dropt their tools, and with all possible speed, hastened to the spot, where blood had flowed. And I have been informed that the training soldiers, on this occasion, ready to avenge the blood of their slaughtered countrymen, marched under officers, who held their commission from the King, whose troops they were willing to engage, without thinking of any impropriety. New-Hampshire troops were distinguished in the war. And as far as can be judged at this time from town records and tradition, Mason bore its full proportion, with other towns, in sufferings and effective labor.

I wish I could give you the names of all the Mason men, who were with the gallant Stark in the battle of Bennington. Many of the young men of the town spent their best days in the army.—Some of the elderly men were found in the tented field; but many of the soldiers entered the service of their country in their very boyhood, not by compulsion, but by voluntary enlistment, and continued in the service, until the independence of the country was acknowledged, and peace spread her blessings over the land. A few, and but a few of them all, survive to the present day.

The names of most of the early settlers in the town, are handed down in their posterity. A few families have lost their name, yet the greater part of the present inhabitants, are descendants of those who cleared the forests for them. Who will be ashamed of such ancestors? We pretend not that they were faultless; but let their descendants emulate their virtues, and avoid their errors and faults, as far as they are known, and Mason will be a happy spot in our favored land.

Your attention is now called to another subject, which makes a part of the history of the town, yet of a different character from that which we have been contemplating.

Health is said to be the greatest of temporal blessings. Of this we have been favored with, at least, a common share with other towns around; and we can tell of many instances of longevity. In the course of the forty last years, there have died in this town 57 between 80 and 90 years old, 14 between 90 and 100. One man,\* over reached 100 years, and another,† 102½. It may be well to note in a passing remark, that these two old men were very temperate, which they lived, in the use of intoxicating drinks, for the age in and their common food was of the plainest kinds.

But notwithstanding the acknowledged healthiness of the place, and many instances of longevity, we have had seasons of calamity, in which mortal sickness has prevailed. We have had two seasons in which *angina maligna*, or throat distemper, or canker rash, so called, has spread terror and dismay over the place, and carried many of the young children and blooming youth, to an early grave. In the year 1810, this dreadful distemper made its appearance, in the last of March, or beginning of April, and continued to spread dismay, until the month of August. In this short period many families felt the scourge, and death cut off twelve children, all but two under the age of five years. Again, in the years 1818 and 19, the same dreadful disease was epidemic in the town, and many of the children and youth fell before this destroyer. These years were the years of the greatest mortality ever known in the town; in one 34, and in the other 31 deaths—65 in two years. In the reign of this malignant disease, but one aged person fell before the shaft of Death, while forty were cut down under the age of 18. With respect to the visitation of this malignant distemper at this time, it is to be remarked, it began in the South East part of the town, in the family of Darius Hudson, in a small house standing on an highly elevated spot, not near any other building; this was about the middle of September, 1818, and continued to rage until the beginning of August, 1819. It is noted, it began in the South East part of the town. By this, you will understand, that we have no knowledge that the sickness existed, at that time, in any neighboring town, and certainly it was not in any other house at this time. Its first appearance was in its most malignant form. In the short space of eight days, three out of seven children died in the first visited family. The disease did not spread in the nearest families. This did not appear to be an irradiating point, from which contagion should issue forth in all directions. Instead of that, its next appearance was at a good distance, at least a mile, to the North East, where there had been no communication between the families. And the third case was in the extreme South part of the town. And thus it extended from East to West, from North to South, to every part of the town. Neither was it always the case, that all the children of the same family, or who lived in the same house, where the sickness was, had it. And not only, as in the first instance, but in other instances, those had the disease, who had not

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\* Jonathan Foster. † Oliver Elliott.

been exposed to catch it, as they say, by coming in contact with the diseased, or entering infected places.

Here I will name one extraordinary case, and leave it without comment.

There was a little girl in a family in the South side of the town, somewhat remote from neighbours, who was the only child in the house. She was an adopted daughter; and the foster mother had such forebodings of death, should the disease attack her child, and such apprehensions of danger from exposure, that from the first knowledge she had of the existence of the disease in the town, she restricted her child to the house, and suffered no child from abroad to enter her doors. This secluded child fell sick of this frightful disease, and died.

In conclusion of this point of interesting history, I state that in the space of the last forty-six years, there have been removed from this town—from their houses, and fields, and possessions, to the narrow home appointed for all the living, a number, little, if any short of 830. What a congregation this would make! more than half the number of the present inhabitants. Looking at the past, what changes may be expected in the future? It is believed that there are but two living, on earth, who were members of the Congregational Church, in this town, in the year 1790,\* and but two who were at that time at the head of a family.† O how often have we all been admonished to prepare for death, and for that judgment which is after death. Death doth not select his victims among the aged, but often levels his arrow at the fairest blooming youth. Let such another period, as we are contemplating, pass away, and few, if any, of the present active inhabitants of this town, will be on earth.

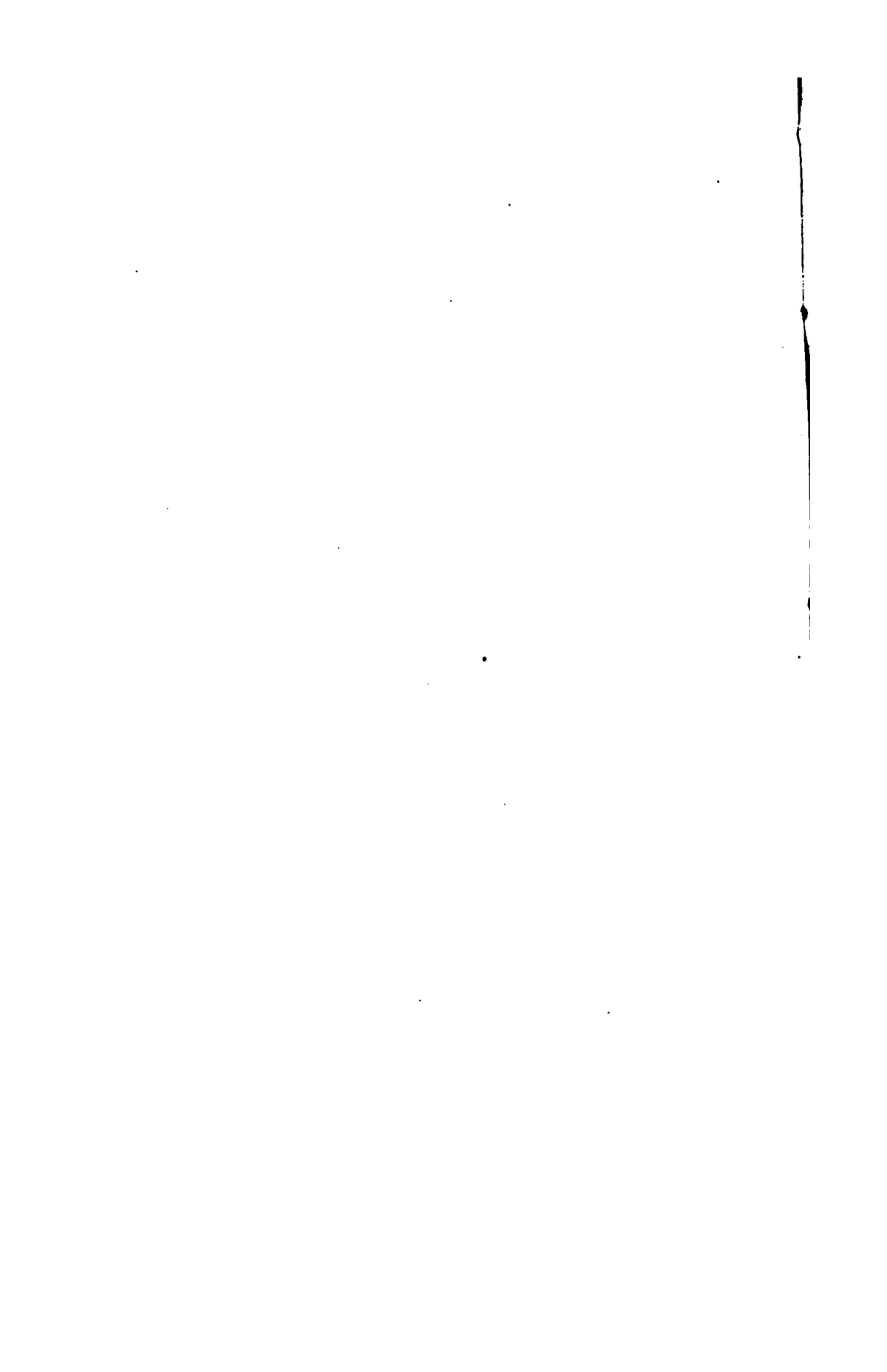
Be not offended, then, with one who has passed the greater part of his short life with you, and whose glass of life is just run out—who would affectionately intreat you to consider your latter end—would direct your attention to the end of time, and to your present preparation to die. O remember, Christ in you is the hope of glory, and the only hope that will not fail. Look away to the Lamb of God, as the only savior of sinners—go to him as sinners—go without delay. Or if you have already made Christ all your salvation, let him have your heart—let him have your life, and then when you shall have done with all things here below, you will not only rest from all your labors in the peaceful grave, but you will live in the full enjoyment of the love and favor of Christ, forever and ever. Your friend prays that your future history, may be pleasantly-instructive to all who come after you; and may your last end be peace.

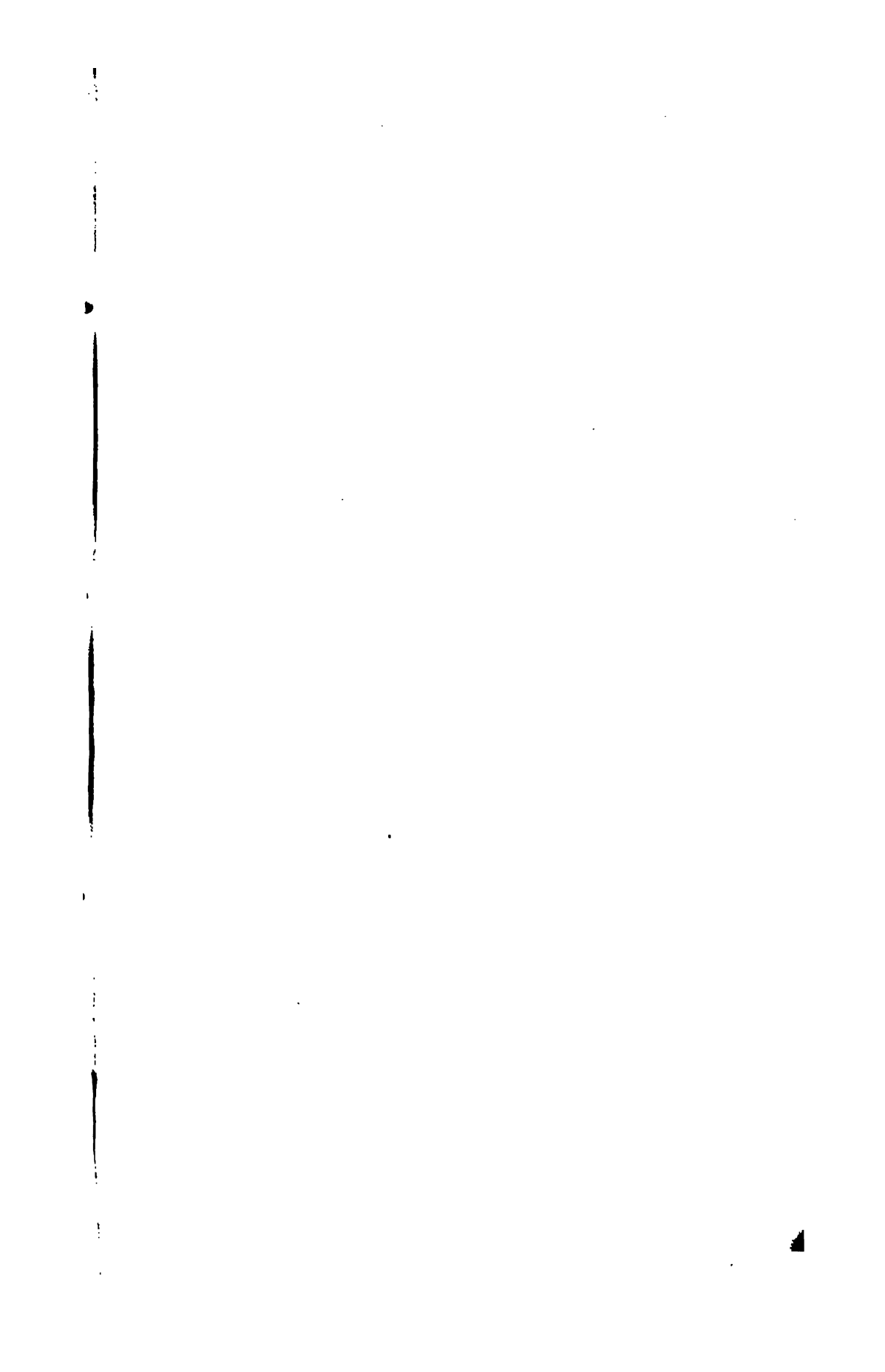
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\* Lydia Wilson and Polly Dunster. † Widow Withington and James Wethee.











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